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Concluding Remarks

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CONCLUDING REMARKS

EDWARD D. RE*

At this point, I believe that we ought to express our gratitude to Svetlana Kornfeind, Luke Dokla, and all of the other members of the St. John's Law Review, as well as all those faculty members who have helped to shape this splendid program. A special word of thanks must also be extended to our distinguished speakers and participants who have succeeded in causing us all to think more seriously about the tremendously important subject that we have discussed, and its critical implications for war and peace. Together, they have taught us a great deal about the war of the Persian Gulf, and have given us new insight into the entire subject of war.

Today, we follow in the footsteps of Cicero, Grotius, St. Thomas Aquinas and other great thinkers by engaging in one of the greatest and most significant endeavors of the human race: dialogue, discussion and debate of the moral and legal justifications for war. It is with profound sadness that one may state that, as long as nations are willing to expend human beings and commit resources to the scourge of war, discussion and debate as to its legality and morality will continue. But I ask that you keep in mind that "the nature of war is to destroy life and property, and that will never change."¹

It is for this reason that the examination and discussion of war should lead us to a better understanding of how wars are started and conducted. Dialogue and discussion should also provide us with a clearer idea as to how wars may be prevented, and how *peace* can be fostered and achieved. Even the early military philosophers counseled that war should be a last resort. The leaders of

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¹ Maj. Bernard K. Schafer, *The Relationship Between the International Law of Armed Conflict and Environmental Protection: The Need to Reevaluate what Types of Conduct are Permissible During Hostilities*, 19 CAL. W. INT'L L.J. 287 (1988-89).

governments in this modern, technological age should heed the advice offered by Philiscus to Alexander the Great: "The slaughter of peoples and the wasting of cities are the work of a pestilence, but that nothing is more befitting a king than to have regard for the safety of all: and that is accomplished by peace."²

Therefore, it is my sincerest hope that what we have accomplished here today is to give a more dramatic realization that war is not only a violent act of killing and destruction of the men and women in the field of battle, but also of society as a whole. This understanding should not help us to prepare for the next war, but rather should help us pave the road for peace. More specifically, I would like to thank our speakers for raising our awareness about these important issues of war and peace.

First we ought to thank the speakers from the first portion of our program who addressed some of the Constitutional issues that came to light during the Persian Gulf conflict. Mr. Blakemore, Commander Slavonic, and Mr. Sloyan opened our eyes to the tension between our First Amendment right to freedom of the press, and the necessity of secrecy in military operations. Ms. Golar introduced us to the controversial issue of women in combat, and the Constitutional implications of the gender-based ban on female combatants. We also thank Colonel Hess and Mr. Kuby, who presented the question of the conscientious objector from a military perspective, and from the perspective of the conscientious objector.

Finally, in the latter portion of our program, our speakers raised some of the very important ethical questions which arose during the Gulf War. Mr. Robinson challenged us to consider a topic that was not often examined after past wars: the destructive effect that war has on our environment. Mr. Parks and Mr. Donihi shared their personal experiences with us, and discussed the possibility of war crime trials arising from the conflict. Professor O'Brien presented his Just War theory and Professor Zahn and Sister Mulready concluded with a pacifist's view of the war.

I conclude by referring to a thought expressed many years ago by a great papal saint. I refer to Pope Gregory the Great, who envisioned a world of *pax et justitia*. He spoke of a mission of pacification in a world where the twin goals would be peace and justice.

² HUGO GROTIUS, *DE JURE BELLI AC PACIS* 577 (James B. Scott ed. & Francis W. Kelsey trans. 1964) (1646).

The ideal of justice cannot be separated from the goal of peace.³

Since so many human beings in the world have never experienced peace, I close by paraphrasing the words of G.K. Chesterton, who, speaking of the Christian ideal, spoke words that are applicable today, although our subject is war and peace. Peace "has not been tried and found wanting: it has been found difficult and not tried."⁴

I thank you for your contribution, participation, and kind attention.

³ *Id.*

⁴ G.K. CHESTERTON, *WHAT'S WRONG WITH THE WORLD* i, 5 (1910).

